CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	McGinnis Meadows Fence Construction
Proposed Implementation Date:	2012
Proponent:	McGinnis Meadows Cattle and Guest Ranch
Location:	Section 16, T26N, R28W
County:	Lincoln

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent has requested to build approximately 3 miles of 3 wire, high tensil, electric fence with wooden braces and corner posts. The fence would be built along the West, North, and East property lines of Section 16, T26N, R28W, and along a short portion of the county road. Wire spacing from the ground up would be 18 inches to the bottom wire, 28 inches to the middle wire and 36 inches to the top wire. This fence would allow the proponent to utilize state land for grazing while preventing livestock from entering the adjacent property.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:
Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project. List number of individuals contacted, number of responses received, and newspapers in which notices were placed and for how long. Briefly summarize issues received from the public.

McGinnis Meadows Cattle and Guest Ranch – Grazing Licensee

Comments were received by the Libby Unit office from two neighboring land owners during April, 2012: Kerrie More, and Eliza Sorte. Four of the primary issues focused on the potential for adverse human health risks, reduced accessibility for recreation, the potential for adverse effects to wildlife, and the potential for increased wildfire risk.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:
Examples: cost-share agreement with U.S. Forest Service, 124 Permit, 3A Authorization, Air Quality Major Open Burning Permit.

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project.

3. ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT:
Describe alternatives considered and, if applicable, provide brief description of how the alternatives were developed. List alternatives that were considered but eliminated from further analysis and why.

Alternative A (No Action) – Deny the requested fence project.

Alternative B (Proposed Action) – Approve the requested fence project.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to soils.

The soil types are generally suitable for the placement of the fence along the property lines. The topography is mountainous with moderate slopes. No cumulative effects to the soils are anticipated.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to water resources.

No important surface or groundwater resources would be impacted by the proposed fencing project. Other water quality and/or quantity issues would not be impacted by the proposed action.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced (i.e. particulate matter from road use or harvesting, slash pile burning, prescribed burning, etc)? Identify the Airshed and Impact Zone (if any) according to the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to air quality.

The proposed fencing project would consist of only minimal disturbance to soils, so no cumulative effects to air quality are anticipated.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to vegetation.

Vegetation would be minimally impacted as a result of the proposed fence construction. Noxious and annual weeds within the proposed construction area are present. Impacts associated with weeds would be expected to be minimal as a result of fence construction. Cumulative impacts on the vegetative resources are not expected due to the small amount of soil disturbance caused by placing fence posts. There would be a minimal risk of electric wire igniting wildfire, if vegetation is left uncontrolled adjacent to the wires.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

The 3 wire, high tensil, electric fence with wire spacing from the ground up of 18 inches to the bottom wire, 28 inches to the middle wire and 36 inches to the top wire, should allow for adequate movements of wildlife found in the area. The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action would not impact wildlife forage, or cover. Traveling corridors would not be expected to be impacted. This action would not change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover. The proposed action would not be expected to have long-term negative effects on existing wildlife species and/or wildlife habitat.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

This area is covered by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Habitat Conservation Plan. In this plan, no significant habitat for grizzly bear or lynx was noted to occur in the project area. This project would not be expected to affect fish. Thus, the potential for detrimental impacts to Grizzly Bear, Lynx and Trout species associated with the proposed action alternative would be minimal.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted. Fisher and Wolverine were identified as occurring within the project area. Due to the size of these species, relative to the proposed fence specifications, the potential for detrimental impacts associated with movement through the fence would be expected to be minimal.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to historical, archeological, or paleontological resources are expected to occur as a result of constructing the fence.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Significant topographic features, terrain or aesthetic values would not be changed by the fence construction. There would be a temporary noise increase associated with a standard fence construction operation.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to environmental resources.

The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy would not be affected by the proposed action. The proposed action would not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are currently no other known activities in the area that the proposed action would affect.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

There are no other known or foreseen studies or plans for this area that are pertinent to this project.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Normal health risks associated with a standard fence construction operation would be expected.

Concerns were expressed that the electricity associated with the fence would be a health risk to people if they happen to contact the fence. The electric fence would be of low amperage and of minimal risk to human health. Gates may be constructed at specific, strategic locations to mitigate concerns with people contacting the fence.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Construction of the fence would allow the grazing permit tee to utilize the rangeland potential of this tract of state land.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to the employment market.

The proposed action would not significantly affect long-term employment in the surrounding communities.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

No direct, indirect or cumulative effects to taxes or revenue would be expected to occur as a result of the proposed action.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

There would be no direct or indirect or cumulative effects on government services.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

The proposed action is in compliance with State and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

There are no wilderness areas within the project area. The project area is used by the public for recreation. Construction of the fence would require the public to cross it while entering and leaving the state land during recreation activities. Gates may be constructed at specific, strategic locations to mitigate concerns with people contacting the low amperage, electric fence.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to population and housing.

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments. No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed action would not impact the cultural uniqueness or diversity of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:
Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify direct, indirect, and cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

This fence would allow the proponent to utilize state grazing land, as there currently is no fence along the property lines. The project would not affect the long-term viability of grazing or forest management on the tract, so no cumulative economic or social effects are likely to occur. This project is authorized under the lease improvement request form.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Dave Marsh	**Date:**	4-23-2012
	Title:	Forest Management Supervisor		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Approve the requested fence project.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Fence is a standard livestock fence, typical of the area, and specifications should allow for adequate movements of wildlife found in the area. The risk of negative environmental impacts is expected to be minimal to non-existent.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ]	EIS	[ ]	More Detailed EA	[X]	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Mark Peck		
	Title:	Libby Unit Manager		
Signature:	/s/ Mark Peck		**Date**:	4/24/2012